



News Release

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Idaho Looks To High Performance Schools
To Conserve Money, Improve Learning Environment

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Idaho School Districts trying to cope with aging, deteriorating classroom buildings while struggling with shrinking budgets will be looking to the future for solutions at a special High Performance Schools workshop set for March 9 in Boise, the Idaho Energy Division announced today.

The workshop is designed to provide school districts with insights and strategies for new school design and construction that can result in vastly improved energy efficiency and interior environment.

“The bottom line in the high performance school approach is significant reductions in energy costs coupled with greatly enhanced student learning environments,” said Sue Seifert, who manages the Rebuild Idaho program for the Energy Division.

High performance schools improve the learning environment while they are saving energy, resources and money. They yield advantages from the local classroom to the district office, including improved student performance, reduced operation costs, increased teacher satisfaction and retention, reduced liability exposure and reduced environmental impacts, Seifert added.

The workshop, being held at the Idaho Power Company offices in Boise, brings together school district representatives with leading school design professionals and utility representatives. The goal is to look at current new school construction techniques and methods in Idaho, and then identify ways the state can incorporate high performance school standards into Idaho’s school construction future.

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“High performance schools are virtually unknown in Idaho but they have been immensely successful all across the rest of the country. They take various forms but they all have certain qualities in common. They use resources such as electricity, gas and water more efficiently, they are responsive to their local climate and environment, they are affordable and, most importantly, they serve as an inspiring place for students to learn,” Seifert added.

A recent study of schools featuring high performance daylight systems in Washington, Colorado and California found that students improved their performance on standardized tests by up to 26 percent over their peers in non-daylight classrooms, according to the BetterBricks initiative of the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance.

Program experts also will take a close look at how well currently Idaho school construction standards and strategies compare to those used with high performance schools. This comparison of what is with what could be is a dramatic way to demonstrate just how successful the high performance schools approach can be, Seifert explained.

“We also want to examine just how to define an Idaho-specific high performance school, to look at the barriers that currently exist and what we can do to move beyond those blockades,” Seifert added.

High performance schools always begin long before the first shovel of dirt is ever turned. The initial blueprint phase is where high performance school designers examine how the school interacts with the climate, when it is occupied and how it is used. These are factors that directly affect how much energy is required to operate the school. These factors also lead to the use of more efficient building materials, lower water usage, improved air quality and overall environmental site considerations that can lower energy use while keeping front end costs low.

Other sponsors of this event include Idaho Power Company, University of Idaho's Urban Research and Design Center, and BetterBricks, an initiative of the Northwest Energy Efficiency Alliance.

For more information about the meeting or high performance schools, contact Seifert at (208) 327-7973. You can also learn more about high performance schools on the Internet at: **www.betterbricks.com/schools** or **www.rebuild.org**.